

## SAINT LOUIS AUDUBON SOCIETY

### BULLETIN

OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 1983

The St. Louis Audubon Society presents the opening film of the 1983-84 Wildlife Films Series on Friday, October 28, 1983, at 8:00 p.m., The Ethical Society, 9001 Clayton Road.

#### WILD AND WONDERFUL ALASKA

personally presented by KEN CREED

##### ABOUT THE FILM. . .

The last great North American wilderness is an outdoorsman's paradise — more than a quarter-of-a-million square miles of river, mountains, tundra, and forests inaccessible by most means of transportation. On the Chilkat River large concentrations of bald eagles gather to find food and survive the winter. Bears fish beside them while salmon struggle to the headwaters of their birth. During the summer months, the moose, largest animal in the deer family, grazes on up to 30 pounds of vegetation per day. In winter Dall's sheep manage to survive on grass and lichen that is exposed on high, windy peaks. Ken Creed explores these and other inspiring life cycles in WILD AND WONDERFUL ALASKA.

##### ABOUT THE FILMMAKER. . .

Ken Creed, a retired construction executive from Atlanta, is a sportsman who has spent many years in the Far North. He is an experienced fisherman, sailor, pilot, and naturalist, having skippered his yacht across the Atlantic and throughout the Caribbean and having logged many hours as a bush pilot. "The skies in Alaska are by far the most treacherous in the world," he says, "and the most pilots have been lost in Alaska." Yet the airplane is an essential means of transportation in this remote country. One of Creed's films has been broadcast on the Alaska Public Broadcasting System. Another is being used by an Alaskan airline. Creed currently spends roughly one-half the year in his native Georgia and the other half in Alaska.

##### FACTS, FIGURES, AND FANTASIES. . .

On their journey to spawning grounds, five varieties of salmon face terrible odds in Alaska. Rivers move against them at rates of up to 69 miles per day, and there are thousands of torrential waterfalls. In 1979, more than 30,000 red salmon were trapped at the base of Russian Falls near the headwaters of the Salmon River. Heavy snowpack caused an unusually high volume of water. Despite a daring Fish and Wildlife Service rescue attempt, virtually half the fish were unable to reach their spawning grounds only five miles upstream. Today, a fish ladder has been built to avoid further depletion of the population.

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AUDUBON SOCIETY EDUCATION CENTER

104 Lewis Road	
Crescent, Missouri	63018
938-6123	

# better photography

LEE F. MASON



"One picture is worth more than ten thousand words!" That's right. The Chinese proverb says "more than ten thousand words," not as we usually see and hear it quoted: "a thousand words."

One photograph can tell more than several paragraphs or even several pages of print. Alfred Eisenstaedt, former Life photographer, said he learned how to use his camera not just to find beauty but to "tell a story with visual images rather than words." He emphasized too that in the "humblest, most commonplace subjects" a photographer can find beauty and meaning. So, occasionally bring your photography in from the vistas, the landscapes, the stretches of seashore, the mountains folding one behind the other. With vacations and summer travel mostly behind us for the year, try NOT "thinking big" in your photography. Look at, really look at, what surrounds you. There is beauty in the grainy, fibrous, woven, or even dimensional quality of all kinds of surfaces; in the stark contrast of sunlight and shadow at various times of the day — on fence rails, on bridge pilings, on stands of ready-to-reap crops, on clumps of weeds; in the detailing of building facades, especially old churches; in a delicate wildflower underfoot, a glowing mushroom on a rotting log, the sparkle of a dew-spangled spiderweb.

The key to arresting, eye-catching, communicating photography is a fresh approach. And that key is there for you to use if you will just begin to observe what you are looking at, but not really seeing every day of your life!

Good photography is not magically contained in any (no matter how expensive) little black box. It comes out of the perception of the photographer. Therein lies the magic. The camera and its gadgets are only the means to record that perception on film for others to see and enjoy.

## NOTICE

Want to polish your photographic skills? Join in the activities of the Nature Photography Section of the Saint Louis Audubon Society. Indoor meetings are the first Tuesday of the month from October through June (no meeting in January). The time of the meeting is 7:45 p.m. sharp in the auditorium of the Clayton Federal Savings and Loan Association, Elm and Lockwood, Webster Groves. WE HOPE YOU'LL COME!

Meeting of October 4, 1983: This is the ANNUAL SHOW AND TELL NIGHT. Everyone is encouraged to bring up to 10 slides or prints for showing. Do share your photographic experiences with the rest of us. Be prepared to tell WHERE, WHEN, AND HOW you took your pictures. You will be the only one to handle your slides. You'll put them into a carousel projection tray, and you will remove them again after the show.

Meeting of November 1, 1983: AN AFRICAN SAFARI by Jane Helbig. Jane used a bit of camera gadgetry — something you can easily make for yourself — that made animal photography "a breeze and a real pleasure!"

Meeting of December 6, 1983: A RETURN TO ALASKA by Al Lodwick. Photographing our northernmost state entails some special considerations, photographically speaking. Al's solutions will have you returning from a trip with more good pictures than usual.

# **!NOTICE!**

SAINT LOUIS AUDUBON SOCIETY APPOINTMENT CALENDAR — 1984

Photographs and descriptive copy by Karl H. and Stephen Maslowski

Karl and his son Stephen have worked together as a team for many years filming wildlife in all parts of the United States, the Arctic, East and South Africa, and the Caribbean. Their still photos have appeared in or on over one thousand newspapers, magazines, books, post cards, etc.

Members of our Society remember them well for visits to Saint Louis as speakers for the Wildlife Films Series. These beautiful works of art show twelve of their best photographs, and there is an educational text for each bird of the month.

This is a limited edition for us, and only 100 copies will be on hand at the film showing. The calendars will be \$3.00 each, by mail \$4.00. What a wonderful Christmas gift!

The calendars are large enough for appointment use, and each month is marked with an 11" x 9" full-colored photograph and a most comprehensive text giving size of the bird, range, nest, and number and color of eggs. There is also a discussion of habitat.

\* \* \* \* \*

## FOR RENT

COTTAGE. Attractive one bedroom. Garage. Country, West County. Fifteen minutes from I-44 and I-270 interchange. Near hard surface road. Electric and water furnished. \$300.00 per month. References exchanged. Call 965-8642.

\* \* \* \* \*

MOBILE HOME. 2 bedrooms and bath. Good condition. Country, West County. Private, but not secluded. Fifteen minutes from I-44 and I-270 interchange. On hard surface road. \$175.00 per month. References exchanged. Call 965-8642.

WILD TURKEY  
(Meleagris gallopavo)

Barbara Perry Lawton

In late summer and fall, it is not unusual to see anywhere from one to a dozen wild turkeys gleaning grain and seeds from fields in St. Louis County. Along Highway T near St. Albans, a resident colony of wild turkeys often browses in the company of white-tailed deer. From a distance, the birds look like big black gnomes pattering along the edges of fields, probably looking for not only ripe seeds, but also insects and succulent weeds.

Nor is it unusual to see wild turkeys in the woods on both sides of Interstate 44 in the neighborhood of Tyson Park in St. Louis County. I once came upon a hen turkey with a large brood of young on a riding trail about a mile off the highway. I don't know who was more startled as we came around the corner — the people, the horses or the turkeys. We shied with the horses and so were not unseated. The hen turkey was totally flabbergasted and, in her alarm, trampled the startled chicks at the same time that she called them and took off running and clucking.

Most recently, I was driving down Interstate 44, just east of the Lewis Road turnoff to the Audubon Society Education Center when I caught sight of a large black object sailing over my car. Instinctively ducking, my first thought was that it must be a giant black goose. But the shape was somewhat more like a Goodyear blimp with extremities. It was, of course, another representative of our local turkey population that is thriving within sight of a high-traffic area.

Turkey Restoration in Missouri

The credit for the wild turkey's comeback in Missouri belongs to the state's Department of Conservation. More specifically, the success of the turkey restoration project in Missouri is due to John Lewis, upland wildlife research supervisor for the department. Lewis joined the Department of Conservation in 1952, a critical time for the turkey population in the entire country.

During the period beginning with the late 1920s and continuing throughout the 1940s, the wild turkey population declined drastically until, in 1952, studies indicated that there were fewer than 2,500 of these birds in the state. (A U.S. survey in 1948 had shown that American wild turkeys then occupied only 12 percent of their former range.)

"When that fact became known, the Missouri Conservation Federation asked why the Department of Conservation hadn't become involved with restoring the turkey in Missouri. And so we did become involved, beginning in 1954 and 1955. We began trapping and relocating wild turkeys from several southern Missouri locations," said John Lewis.

The nuts and bolts of the operation hinged on the fact that communities throughout Missouri were interested in supporting the relocation project and signed up to have wild turkeys released in their areas.

"Between 1954 and 1979, we relocated some 2,700 turkeys to 154 sites in nine counties. About 80 percent of the birds were released on private land. Normal

releases included 20 to 24 birds in a group, with proportions of a couple of hens to each of six to eight toms. We would take no more than 10 percent of a healthy turkey population in areas where there were maximum numbers. We trapped and moved the turkeys between January and early March, choosing as relocation sites areas with at least 50 percent timber. We also took into account the fact that areas with corn and bean fields would support a larger population," Lewis said.

Trapping wild turkeys is a challenge even with cannon-net traps in baited sites. Lewis reports that the wild birds have "keen eyesight and memories that are unbelievable." Everything must be camouflaged, from the blind to every bit of wire, net and equipment.

"We used small four-inch-diameter mortars with projectiles attached to the corners of the net and propelled by black powder. The net itself is 60-by-30 feet in area. We found that the baited areas attracted turkeys best during the winter, especially during January when natural foods were scarce. At first, we were frustrated by watching the turkeys arrive, then run off before we could net them. Once we realized that they would shy at even a small bit of exposed wire, we began to have greater success as we put more effort into our camouflage," Lewis said.

The current St. Louis County turkey colonies are probably descendants of birds that moved in from Franklin County as well as from St. Charles County — from Busch Wildlife Area across the Missouri River to Howell Island and so into Franklin County.

Turkey releases took place in Franklin County in 1963 and 1967, the latter at a site north of Sullivan near the Bourbeuse River. In 1972, a group of turkeys were released in St. Charles County near Defiance. Other releases, an improvement in the carrying capacities of the environment and a carefully controlled hunting season have joined to restore the wild turkey to its current flourishing state throughout much of Missouri.

"The wild turkey probably would have come back to some degree, but without relocation they couldn't possibly have returned to as much territory in such great numbers," Lewis said. Franklin County today is one of the top turkey-harvest counties in Missouri. The turkey relocation project begun in the 1950s is clearly one of the Missouri Department of Conservation's greatest successes, showing what careful management can accomplish with a threatened species.

### The Early Days

Benjamin Franklin, in the 18th century, fought the designation of the bald eagle as our national bird, saying that a "thoroughly native and useful fowl, like the wild turkey, would make a far truer emblem for the new and busy nation." He remarked that the wild turkey's good qualities included courage, adding that the birds would not hesitate to attack any Redcoat that entered its yard.

"When the noble red man roamed and hunted unrestrained throughout the virgin forests of eastern North America, this magnificent bird, the wild turkey, another noble native of America, clad in a feathered armor of glistening bronze, also enjoyed the freedom of the forests from Maine and Ontario, southward and westward," said Arthur Cleveland Bent in Life Histories of North American Gallinaceous Birds, published in 1932.



One of the turkey's earliest observers, Thomas Morton (1637) said, "Turkies there are, which divers times in great flocks have sallied by our doores; and then a gunne, being commonly in a rediness, salutes them with such a courtesie, as makes them take a turne in the Cooke roome. They daunce by the doore so well."

Signs of dwindling turkey populations seemed to have been observed even in that century. John Josselyn wrote in 1672, "I have also seen threescore broods of young Turkies on the side of a marsh, sunning of themselves in a morning betimes, but this was thirty years since, the English and the Indians having now destroyed the breed, so that 'tis very rare to meet with wild Turkies in the Woods."

According to Audubon, that first master chronicler of North American wild birds, early settlers found a bountiful supply of wild turkeys. Unfortunately, this soon changed, and, by 1800, the wild turkey was rare in Pennsylvania and becoming exceedingly scarce in New England. Wild turkeys made their last stand in Massachusetts in 1851 when the last one known was killed in the Holyoke Range just north of Springfield.

In 1907, turkeys were still living and breeding in St. Louis and Franklin Counties, although in small numbers, according to Dr. W. Mills of Webster Groves, as reported by Otto Widmann in Birds of Missouri (1907, Academy of Science of St. Louis). Formerly, they had been known throughout the State of Missouri and west to Kansas and Nebraska.

Our domestic turkey is the descendant of the wild Meleagris subspecies found originally in Mexico. Natives of the northern coast of Yucatan had domesticated these birds by the time Francisco Fernandez landed in 1517. Other explorers also found this species in domestic form throughout much of the rest of Mexico.

These birds were transported to Europe and introduced to farmers there, then brought back to America by subsequent settlers. The travels of the turkey are similar to those of the marigold, zinnia and potato. Today's domestic turkeys are all from the original Mexican subspecies, which is distinguished by the white tips on their tails.

#### Observations on the Wild Turkey

Like other members of the Galliformes order, the wild turkey is comparatively heavy-bodied with fairly short, rounded wings. Like barnyard chickens, they are land birds with short heavy bills and strong legs. Turkeys are good runners, and although they seem to lack the needed aerodynamic qualities, capable of sprint-like flights. They can leap into flight from a standstill, much like the partridge.

The wild turkey looks much like a streamlined barnyard specimen, with rusty rather than pale tail tips. The body is both iridescent and bronze in color, although they appear black when not in sunlight and at a distance. Both primary and secondary wing feathers are barred. The naked bluish head has warty red wattles.

Both male and female are likely to develop hairy "beards" which hang like thin pendulums from their breasts. In the female, the beard is smaller — indeed, the female bird is smaller than the big toms and is likely to be less iridescent as well. Wild turkeys strut, raise their feathers, beat their wings, and leap into the air in elaborate courtship displays.

According to Donald Culross Peattie, editor of Audubon's America (1940), Audubon reported that during his extensive travels in the 1840s through the West, including Missouri, he saw turkeys gather in bands during October and move toward the rich bottom lands of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. The males moved in parties of 10 to 100 while the females moved singly with their broods of almost-grown young. Occasionally females with broods would join into parties of up to 70 or 80, but all would avoid the males, which will attack and often kill young birds with repeated blows to their heads.

Once at the rivers' banks, the turkeys would take to the tallest trees for a day or two and then, as if by signal, would take flight for the far shore. According to Audubon, the old fat birds could fly over, even a distance of a mile, but the less robust and young birds would frequently fall in the water. "Closing their wings tightly, they spread their tails, stretch their necks forward and kicking with great vigor, proceed rapidly for shore. Having accomplished this feat they ramble about in some disorder as if bewildered," Audubon wrote.

The males initiate the breeding season by beginning to chase the females in mid-February. The big tom turkeys gobble and hoot, rushing at the sound of a female call with tails spread, wings depressed and feathers fluffed. Their wings quiver as they strut pompously, emitting "a succession of puffs from their lungs" as they move about, wooing available hens.

Audubon reported considerable bloodshed and some loss of life as stronger males would strike the heads of weaker rivals to drive them off. Each turkey cock attempted to gather a harem of several females who would roost in his neighborhood. The female turkey shows acceptance of the male by strutting and boggling near him, then suddenly spreading her wings and throwing herself on the ground before him.

The females build their nests, usually alone (though at times more than one will share a nest), in secluded spots where the males can't find them. They never take the same path to the nest when they return and are constantly alert to possible danger. The females return to the males for just a short time each day during the early part of the egg-laying period.

"After this, the males become clumsy and slovenly, if one may say so, cease to fight with each other, give up gobbling or calling so frequently, and assume so careless a habit that the hens are obliged to make all the advances themselves," Audubon wrote.

Bent writes that the normal set of eggs ranges from eight to 15. The eggs are ovate, varying from short ovals to others that are quite long and pointed. Shells of the eggs are smooth with a matte finish. The ground colors are from soft white to pale buffy pink with reddish dots and average about 62.6 by 44.6 millimeters. The period of incubation is 28 days.



The chicks usually hatch in May, and the mothers will not leave the nests under any circumstances when hatching time is near. Audubon reports that the hens can even be penned at that time. He saw a turkey hen, lifting herself slightly to watch the eggs, remove the empty shells and caress each new chick. When all were hatched, the hen shook herself in a violent manner, rearranged her feathers and moved off with her brood, sheltering them with her wings.

Hens may return to the nest with the chicks the first night, but then usually move off to higher, dry ground. At the fluffy-down stage of early growth, water and rain are a great threat to the chicks. Once their feathers begin to grow — first on the wings, then on the back, breast and flanks, and finally on the tail, head and belly — they are able to withstand inclement weather.

A post-juvenile molt takes place in September, after which the young birds look quite adult although they will continue to gain in size and weight for their first several years.

Researchers have long noted that turkeys have a rather large vocabulary that ranges from quiet, motherly clucks to loud yelps and gobbles, querulous yelps and irritated "quit-quits."

Although our wild turkeys are not migratory in the true sense of the word, they do wander in search of food, especially in fall and winter. Their travels may be quite extensive. Their ordinary means of locomotion is on foot. Flight is most often used to cross a barrier or in alarm. The long, powerful legs make it possible for the turkey to travel swiftly over long distances if need be. In past centuries, they have been known to outdistance both men and horses during hunts.

Analysis of turkey diets by studies of stomach contents has shown that their diet includes as much as 16 percent animal matter and 84 percent vegetable matter. Bent says that the exact proportions, of course, depend upon the season and what is available. Insects and miscellaneous invertebrates, including snails and spiders, are among favorite animals in the turkey's diet. The vegetable foods include browse (I presume this means grasses and other foliage foods), fruit, mast, and other miscellaneous vegetable matter. In the summer and fall, turkeys often show an inordinate fondness for grasshoppers and crickets.

The only time that turkeys may have a tough time getting around the forest floor is when snow is soft and deep. At such times they may remain in trees until relief comes, subsisting on whatever buds, fruits, nuts, and berries may have remained on the branches and twigs. In modern times, turkeys have adjusted to farm crops and barnyards to such a degree that their foraging journeys take them through crop fields as well as along roads and tracks where grain may have spilled.

Our native wild turkey is the largest and grandest game bird in the world, certainly in North America, according to expert, Arthur Bent. He adds that those who call turkeys stupid have never tried to find them. "They develop considerable experience and skill in outwitting hunters as well as bird watchers. Their hearing is acute, and though their eyes can't detect stationary objects, they are quick to detect the slightest movement. They are always on alert for their enemies, especially human beings."

# SAINT LOUIS AUDUBON SOCIETY EDUCATION CENTER

## OCTOBER PROGRAMS

All programs will be held at the Saint Louis Audubon Society Education Center, 104 Lewis Road, Crescent, Missouri (off Interstate 44 just west of Tyson Park). These are the first programs to be held at the Center since acquiring the property. We are proud to be able to host these and other programs to all who are interested in outdoor activities and the natural world.

Reservations one week prior to programs. Include check for full amount of programs you wish to attend. Wear comfortable clothes and walking shoes. Bring sack lunch and drink. For further information call Saint Louis Audubon Society, 965-8642.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 16, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

EDIBLE PLANTS OF MISSOURI presented by Bill Brush, author and educator. Group limited to 25 people. \$5 for Audubon members; \$7 for nonmembers.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 22, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

ORIENTEERING, the popular hiking sport that teaches you how to use and read compasses and topographical maps, presented by Bill Kloppe, educator and youth leader. Group limited to 25. \$5 for Audubon members; \$7 for nonmembers.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 30, from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY presented by members of the Audubon Photography Section under leadership of Al Lodwick, noted wildlife photographer. Field work and slide demonstration. Group limited to 25 people. \$5 for Audubon members; \$7 for nonmembers.

## RESERVATION BLANK

Make check payable to Saint Louis Audubon Society and mail with this reservation blank to Saint Louis Audubon Society, 2109 Briargate Lane, St. Louis, Missouri 63122.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

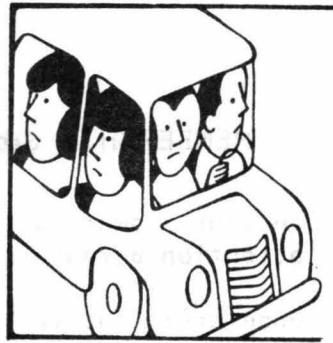
STREET \_\_\_\_\_

CITY and ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE NO. \_\_\_\_\_

Number of people \_\_\_\_\_

		Members	Nonmembers
OCTOBER 16	Edible Plants	\$5 _____	\$7 _____
OCTOBER 22	Orienteering	\$5 _____	\$7 _____
October 30	Nature Photography	\$5 _____	\$7 _____
Total \$		_____	



#### WORKDAY - AUDUBON EDUCATION CENTER

October 15, Saturday, from 9 a.m. until dark. Cut wire fence, pick up, cut grass, repair porch, general cleanup. Wear comfortable clothes. Bring gloves and sack lunch. Beverage furnished.

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#### MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

In 1979, a membership survey of the Saint Louis Audubon Society showed that the establishment of a local sanctuary was extremely important. Now, in 1983, we have inherited the Crescent, Missouri property of Dr. and Mrs. Charles Terry and thus have our own sanctuary. We are calling this property the Saint Louis Audubon Society Education Center.

A special committee has been assigned to begin developing a master plan for this property. Your Board of Directors will study the proposal and decide how it can be implemented. We hope to develop programs that will benefit all of our members and the community as well.

In the meantime, we need the input and help of each and every member of the Saint Louis Audubon Society. We would like to know if you will be willing to help coordinate and lead nature walks, environmental classes and other events that could be planned for the Education Center. What are your areas of expertise?

We would like to make an appeal for any equipment that could be used in educational programs on wildlife, the natural sciences and the environment. Do you have binoculars, a projector, a barometer, wind-speed instruments, field guides, or other items that you would be willing to donate for use at the Education Center?

Would you be willing to donate money toward the support of an educational program for school children, senior citizens, Audubon members and others? Would you be willing to donate money for the purchase of needed educational equipment? A weather station? Alternative energy equipment? Audio-visual equipment? Maps and charts? Compasses?

## MEMBERSHIP SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

We would appreciate your answering this survey and mailing it to the Saint Louis Audubon Society, attention Barbara Lawton, 2109 Briargate Lane, St. Louis, MO 63122.

My areas of knowledge are: native birds\_\_\_\_; native plants\_\_\_\_; geology\_\_\_\_; meteorology\_\_\_\_; photography\_\_\_\_; drawing/painting\_\_\_\_; other (name)\_\_\_\_\_.

I would be willing to volunteer my time to conduct a walk or talk at the Audubon Education Center:

monthly\_\_\_\_; special short course\_\_\_\_; seasonally\_\_\_\_: spring\_\_\_\_, summer\_\_\_\_, fall\_\_\_\_, winter\_\_\_\_; special arrangement\_\_\_\_; other\_\_\_\_\_.

I have the following items/books/other that might be of use at the Education Center. I would like to donate them for use in the educational programs.\*

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(list items)

I am willing to support Saint Louis Audubon Society Education Center programs and purchase of educational materials through donations of money for:

programs\_\_\_\_; equipment\_\_\_\_; operating expenses\_\_\_\_; other\_\_\_\_\_.

Enclosed is my check for \$\_\_\_\_\_.\*

\*All donations are tax deductible.

I would like more information about projects needing financial support.

Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address and zip code

\_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone number